

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

were making Avignon a less desirable residence. Innocent spoke of returning to, or at least visiting, Rome. In 1353, he sent the great Spanish cardinal, Egidio (or Gil) de Albornoz, as legate to Italy, to re-establish the power of the Holy See in the States of the Church.

The two great powers of the peninsula (leaving Venice out of the question, as, indeed, she did not yet concern herself much with the politics of the mainland) were Milan in the north, where the Visconti—the typical Italian tyrants of the age—were absorbing a great part of Lombardy, and Naples in the south, under the sway of sovereigns of the house of Anjou, the descendants of the great Charles whom Dante saw in the Valley of the Princes outside the gate of Purgatory. The one state was an absolute despotism, under a family traditionally hostile to the Church ; the other a feudal kingdom, normally a staunch supporter of the Holy See.

On the death of Luchino Visconti in 1349, his brother, the Archbishop Giovanni—an able and astute ruler, one of the least atrocious of his cruel house—united the spiritual and temporal sovereignty of its dominions in his own person. Bologna, though nominally subject to the Church, had been the most powerful city in Romagna, and one of the chief free republics of central Italy. But the factions, raging there as elsewhere, had led to its falling in 1321, the year of Dante's death, under the sway of a single man, Romeo de' Pepoli, whose grandsons sold it in 1350 to the Archbishop of Milan. Clement VI shamelessly confirmed this transaction by granting him the investiture of Bologna for twelve years. On the death of Giovanni in 1354, he was succeeded in his temporal sovereignty by his three nephews : Matteo, Bernabo, and Galeazzo; but in 1356, either consumed by his own lusts or poisoned by his brothers, Matteo died, and the other two divided the dominions of their house. Bernabo made Milan his capital, while Galeazzo, after the capture of Pavia in 1359, set his headquarters in the latter city. A Visconti of uncertain parentage, Giovanni da Oleggio (possibly an unacknowledged bastard of the late Archbishop), made himself